

## TOP TIPS...

### ...for improving the appearance of your ads, brochures and mailers.

Market testing has gone on to prove that 'targeting' and the 'offer' in a marketing piece are the key elements of a campaign's success. However, it is still important to give your promotional material a professional and business look.

Your advert or flyer is your 'shop window' to the reader, at that point in time. Yet, in so many cases, promotional pieces can look thrown together and disjointed. Short of going to an advertising agency or a graphic design studio, what can you do to lift the quality of your promotional material?

#### Make the headline dominant

Given that you will sweat hard and long to write your headline, make sure it's the first thing to hit the reader's eyes after the illustration.

That means, don't fall for the trendy practice of putting the headline in the middle of the body copy... or at the bottom of the ad, as is often seen. Have you ever seen a newspaper editor (past masters of the use of headlines to create impact) do that?

And make sure you have a headline that sells. Just putting the product name at the top is not a headline!

#### Observe 'reader gravity'

Many promotional pieces are a mismatch of different sized type, unrelated panels of information, and big gaps of white space. Things that make it tough for the reader to follow the message. As you know, the reader will only give you a fleeting opportunity to make an impression, after that, it's into the bin.

We were taught to read left to right, top to bottom. Follow that 'rule' in your layout and you'll lift readership. It doesn't mean you can't use creativity, but use it wisely.

#### Avoid over-use of ALL CAPS

Upper case is considered an effective way to emphasise a point. However, it is tiring and unnatural on the eye if used in excess.

Likewise, avoid using oversized type just to fill up the spaces. Oversized type is just like shouting at your reader something you'd hardly do face to face.

#### Limit yourself to 2 font families

To give your piece a unified and professional look, I recommend that you limit the number of fonts you use. It is best to use one font family (preferably a strong one) for your headlines and another font family for the body copy. A font family is all the related styles that come with the font, and usually include bold, italic, and bold italic.

#### Body copy

Avoid sans serif typefaces in a heavy body of copy. They are harder to read than serif typefaces. Type size in body copy? Never smaller than 7pt. Outside of headlines and subheads, rarely would you go bigger than 14pt.

Also, it's safer to use black ink for body copy (and halftone illustrations), and keep other colours for borders, screens and headlines.

#### White space

Don't be afraid of white space. Don't think that you must fill the whole piece with text or illustrations. White space can actually be as much of an element in the design as copy or pictures, and should be considered in the same light.

#### Study other adverts and mailers for ideas on balance

Some ads are too balanced! Their rigid symmetry makes them blend into the page or become a piece of 'art', while other 'less professional' ads stand out. A careful use of asymmetry can catch the eye. Incidentally, just making a border heavier than all the surrounding ads won't guarantee readership. It is the headline and illustration that earn the attention of the reader.

#### Make your story unfold as the brochure unfolds

A high majority of promotional pieces are just flat flyers. Yet, with a little time sitting down with a blank 'dummy' to rough out headlines and illustrations, you can often discover some interesting ways to make your story unfold in a way that grabs the reader with the front cover 'headline', then 'invites' them to keep delving further and further until your whole message is told and you've asked for the order.

#### Make sure they can contact you

You will be amazed at the amount of marketing pieces that do not include contact details some just include a web address, assuming that everyone will visit that for additional contact information. Wrong! Always ensure your telephone number is included, not oversized but legible and differentiated from the fax number. In addition include your street address (unless you don't want customers showing up at your doorstep.)

#### Don't be afraid to spend a little

False economy creeps in when printing costs are being discussed. Printers often steer clients away from 'expensive' paper stocks, and from extra colours in the print run.

You should weigh up your decision in terms of the extra sales that a better quality promotional piece can bring, against the 'cost' of having a cheaper brochure 'down sell' your business.

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